

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 2631

By Ms. Malia of Boston, petition of Elizabeth A. Malia and others for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) of health literacy. Public Health.

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

### PETITION OF:

Elizabeth A. Malia	Paul J. Donato
Matthew C. Patrick	Alice K. Wolf
Christine E. Canavan	Jarrett T. Barrios
Barbara A. L'Italien	Patricia D. Jehlen
John D. Keenan	Benjamin Swan
Marie P. St. Fleur	Mark V. Falzone
Frank I. Smizik	Peter V. Kocot
Kathleen M. Teahan	John W. Scibak
Jeffrey Sánchez	

In the Year Two Thousand and Five.

### AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION ON HEALTH LITERACY.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1     SECTION 1. Notwithstanding the provisions of any general or  
2     special law to the contrary, there is hereby established a special  
3     commission for the purpose of making an investigation and study  
4     of health literacy in Massachusetts, effective methods of commu-  
5     nicating health information to consumers and methods of  
6     increasing health literacy in Massachusetts. Said commission shall  
7     consist of two members of the House of Representatives to be  
8     named by the speaker, one of whom shall be designated as co-  
9     chair of the commission, two members of the Senate to be named  
10    by the president of the Senate, one of whom shall be designated as  
11    co-chair of the commission, one member representing the Execu-  
12    tive Office of Health and Human Services; one member repre-  
13    senting the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health;

14 one member representing the Commissioner of the Department of  
15 Education; one member representing the Massachusetts Public  
16 Health Association; one member representing the Massachusetts  
17 Pharmacists Association; one member representing the Massa-  
18 chusetts Nurses' Association; one member representing the Massa-  
19 chusetts Medical Society; one member representing Massachusetts  
20 League of Community Health Centers; one member representing a  
21 community health center that works with individuals who have  
22 difficulties with health literacy; one member representing Health  
23 Literacy Consulting, one member representing the Tufts School of  
24 Medicine; one member representing the Health Literacy Studies  
25 Department at the Harvard School of Public Health; one member  
26 representing an organization which teaches English as a Second  
27 language; one member representing an organization which teaches  
28 adult basic education; one member representing an agency  
29 working with elders who have difficulties with health literacy; one  
30 member representing an agency working with immigrants who  
31 have difficulties with health literacy; one member representing an  
32 agency working with disabled individuals who have difficulties  
33 with health literacy; one member representing a community-based  
34 organization working with individuals who have difficulties with  
35 health literacy. Other appointments may be made to the commis-  
36 sion by the co-chairs to provide for a variety of experience and  
37 viewpoints.

38 Said commission shall investigate the current status of health  
39 literacy in Massachusetts and identify barriers to improving the  
40 public's level of health literacy. Said commission shall in partic-  
41 ular review options for increasing residents' literacy in health  
42 matters, in light of the findings of several reports that nearly 90  
43 million Americans have limited ability understanding health  
44 related information and data. Said commission shall also examine  
45 health literacy issues affecting cultural and linguistic minorities,  
46 elders and other high risk populations, improving outreach and  
47 education programs, and such other matters as the commission  
48 shall determine.

49 Said commission shall report the results of its investigation and  
50 study, together with its recommendations, if any, by filing the  
51 same with the House and Senate committees on ways and means,  
52 the committee on health care, the clerk of the House of Represen-  
53 tatives, and the clerk of the Senate on or before January 1, 2006.

1     SECTION 2. The co-chairs of the commission shall designate  
2     each October as Health Literacy Month in Massachusetts.